

SOFIA
UNIVERSITY



ST. KLIMENT
OHRIDSKI
EST. 1888

Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria

Mobility without borders - challenges

*UNICA
IRO GROUP meeting
Sofia 2023*





Mobility within Bilateral Agreements (Memorandums of Understanding)

Up to now Sofia University has concluded 425 Memorandums of understanding/Bilateral agreements with more than 70 countries:

- The student's and lecturer's exchange is one of the main part of the bilateral agreements;
- The incoming students don't pay tuition fee and they are supported by the International Relations Dept. for a visa issuance and accommodation at the student dormitory;
- The students study at SU for 1 or 2 semesters or participate in summer courses;
- SU issues Transcripts of Records to the students for the academic courses held and the obtained credits.

Mobility within EU funded Programmes and Projects



Erasmus Programme starts at SU in 1999

- KA103 + KA131 (between European partners) – since 1999 (840 agreements with 380 universities from 33 countries)
- KA107 + KA171 (between Non-European partners) – since January 2015 (8 projects with 55 universities from 28 countries)
- Sofia University holds the top position in the number of students hosted and sent abroad within the Erasmus+ Programme. For the period 2019-2023, 624 outgoing and 710 incoming mobilities of students and PhD were implemented.

SU has been awarded twice the Erasmus+ Programme Implementation Prize in competition with other Bulgarian Universities (in 2013 and 2019).

On December 21, 2022, Erasmus team of SU was awarded the Sofia University Quality Mark in the Sustainable Development category.



Partner Countries

Albania, Argentina,
Australia, Bosnia &
Herzegovina, Brazil, Cabo
Verde, China, Cuba,
Georgia, India, Indonesia,
Israel, Japan, Jordan,
Kazakhstan, Korea,
Lebanon, Mali, Mauritius,
Mexico, Morocco, Nepal,
Republic of South Africa,
Rwanda, Senegal, Sudan,
Thailand, Tunisia,
Ukraine, Uzbekistan,
USA, Vietnam





Challenges – Erasmus+ (KA107/171)

1. How to choose the partners?

- Existing bilateral agreements – *ex. Kazakhstan*
- Other previous projects (Basileus) – the Balkan countries
- Previous successful cooperation within Erasmus Mundus Programme
- Collaboration regarding specific areas of knowledge (protected specialties) – Arabic studies, Indian languages, Chinese and Korean sciences, Japanese studies

2. Budget guidelines

Competition counts:

- External – with the other universities in Bulgaria
- Internal – between the faculties



Challenges – Erasmus+ (KA107/171)

3. Project proposal development

Information from the NA is announced in late December

Presentation of the new opportunities to all Faculties + Discussion on the required documents and information to be included in the Project Proposal

Signed Inter-institutional Agreements – mandatory

Motivation for each proposal – from the interested Faculty and the partner HEI (deadline for submission of the requested documents – 2 weeks before the deadline for submission of the Project)

Submission of the Project to the NA

4. Restriction for some degrees

ex. Morocco, Tunisia



There's Just Not
ENOUGH
Time!

Common problems - Erasmus+ (KA107/171)

1. Visa issuance – more problems for students due to the longer period of stay

High cost for visa issuance for Bulgaria – 200 EUR + Long period of approval – 30–40 days

No Embassy/Consulate of some countries (*ex. Mexico is served by its Embassy in Hungary;*

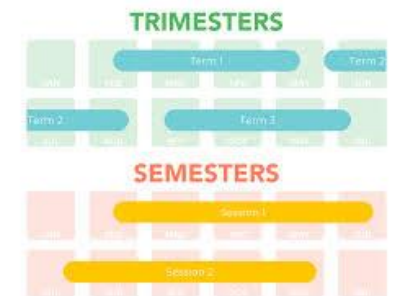
in Nepal Bulgaria is served by its Embassy in India)

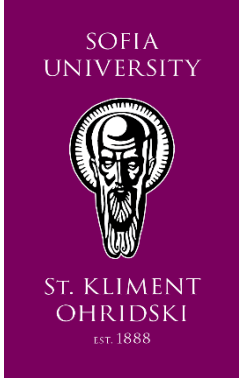
Various documents required for visa issuance – for our students

2. Problems with bank accounts

3. Different academic calendars

ex. the semesters/terms in Bulgaria and Brazil/India don't coincide





Common problems - Erasmus+ (KA107/171)

4. Lack of experience to implement similar projects

Constant change of the contact/responsible persons

Specific internal administrative regulations

Lack of flexibility

The partner does not take into account the number of mobilities that have been approved

The partner does not comply with the areas of knowledge – *ex. Kazakhstan*

The partner gives wrong information to the students – *ex. Tunisia*



Common problems - International Students Admission



International Students Admission for a full-time study period:

- Difficulties in issuing a visa Type D depended on the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Complex admission and recognition procedure of secondary education diploma
- Time limits on procedures depended on Ministry of Education

International Students Admission for a part-time study period - Intergovernmental agreements, Bilateral contracts and Memorandums of understanding:

- Lack of reciprocity and collaboration in international student exchange (Ex. students from Kazakhstan and Japan)
- Difficulty of studying - insufficient language skills



Main problems - Erasmus+

Decrease of outgoing student mobility:

- No travel grant included (KA131);
- Coronavirus global emergency;
- Current Situation in Ukraine





LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Any unclarities should be elucidated:

- Blended Intensive Programme (BIP)
- PhD mobilities
- Joining together - combining study and practice, teaching and learning as well
- Green travel
- Lack of a clear definition of less able-participants - how to prove?
- New programme' activities and rules - such as what kind of reporting documents to the National Agency should be?



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